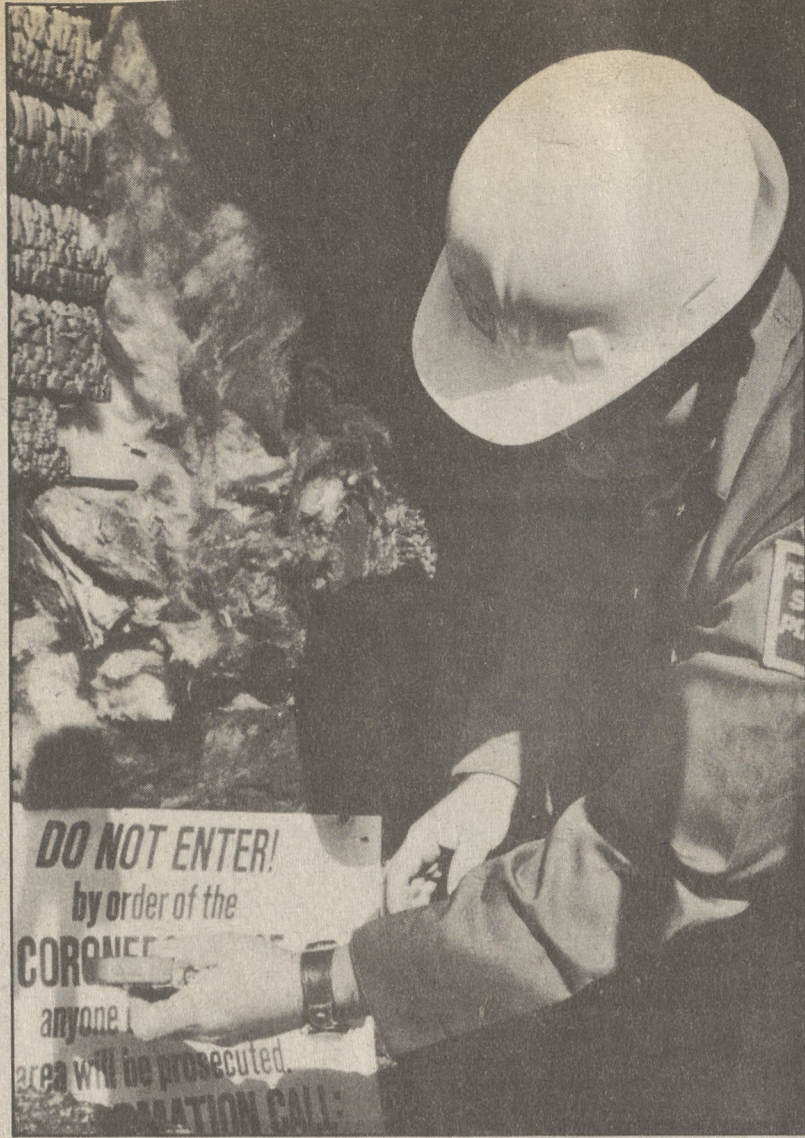




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Charred ruins

A member of the Pennsylvania State Police looks over the ruins of the Thomas Guest Home that was destroyed in an early morning fire Tuesday.

Posting signs

An unidentified member of the Pennsylvania State Police posts a "Do Not Enter" sign on the charred remains of the Thomas Guest Home following a tragic fire early Tuesday morning.

Answering questions

Nick Gushka of the Pennsylvania State Police responds to questions from reporters following a tragic fire in Sweet Valley that destroyed the Thomas Guest Home and claimed the lives of seven people.



Dallas Post/Ed Campbell

Center re-opens

Shown here during the reopening ceremonies of the Robert D. Wintersteen Memorial Recreation Center at Harveys Lake are, from left, seated, Rhonda Forster, Sheila Dobrowski, Kevin Jones, Lisa Tattersall. Second row, Ailene Forster, Esther Grey, Evelyn Wintersteen, Blake Edwards, Michelle Boice. Standing, Sandra Dobrowski, Councilman Ray Jones, Frank Buono and Dave Forster.

Wintersteen Center re-opens

A grand re-opening of the Robert D. Wintersteen Memorial Recreation Center at Harveys Lake was held on Tuesday, July 16.

This building was constructed with grant monies several years ago, when Robert Wintersteen served on Borough Council as the Recreation Chairman. To date, the building has been used by various Borough groups, such as the Boy Scouts and Little League, as a

meeting place. Through the efforts of current borough council, and especially councilman Frank Buono, Recreation Chairman, along with Ailene Forster, wife of councilman David Forster, the building is going to be used as a recreation center for borough youth. Roth Novelty Company of Wilkes-Barre has been very cooperative in assisting Buono and Forster in putting a program together. The building contains

many of today's popular video games, as well as concession machines. Adult supervision will be provided at all times when the building is open. Ailene Forster has volunteered much of her time to get the program started and will be one of the adult supervisors. She is looking for more parents to donate time in this regard. Anyone who would like to get involved is asked to contact Ailene at her home, 639-1994, or through the Borough Secretary. The numbers of hours in which the building will be open is dependent on how much volunteer help is donated. Council's recreation budget is very limited, and Ailene, therefore, is hopeful that residents will get involved to build this program for the youth. Many of the popular recreation sights for the borough youth have either been torn down, or closed over the years. It is therefore, hoped, that this can be a simple beginning to a more complex recreation program for the youth of our borough.

DER

(Continued from page 1) member council, which will be made up of local business leaders, educators and residents, will serve three, two and one year appointed terms.

Jones said the EAC is very important because it will become more involved with the Lake's problems and it (EAC) will be able to work on viable solutions. Jones also said that borough politics will be kept out of the appointment process.

"We want a council which is not political," Jones said. "Politics should not affect the choice of qualified people for the council."

Jones said that the EAC will be a more potent governing body than just an appointed "committee" because if the political structure of council changes, the appointed EAC members remain until their terms

run out. Said Jones, "This way they (EAC) members know that they are going to be there and they can help the community."

The copper sulfate treatment cost Harveys Lake Borough \$3,250. Harveys Lake Borough paid \$1,250 and the Pennsylvania Water and Conservation Fund contributed an additional \$2,000 through state representative George Hasay's office.

The EAC, Jones said, will be commissioned to do periodic water sampling of Harveys Lake and to determine possible solutions for any water quality problems. The seven-member council, which will be made up of local business leaders, educators and residents, will serve three, two and one year appointed terms.

Fire

(Continued from page 1)

cal condition. Sweet Valley fireman Lester Lynn, 19, was admitted to Wilkes-Barre General Hospital for smoke inhalation and electrical shock. He was listed in fair condition. Fireman Drew Weber, 38, was treated for smoke inhalation and later released.

According to Deputy Luzerne County Coroner Joseph Shaffer, there were 19 people, 14 boarders and five members of the Thomas family, living in the two-story structure. The patients were all sleeping on the first floor of the structure when the blaze broke out. The home, a boarding home, for elderly persons who were not totally disabled, was designed to house 21 residents.

Pennsylvania State Police Fire Marshall Nick Guska said, "They (the boarders) were all in bed. This in itself was a major factor in their death. Half the patients probably did not even know what was happening."

According to eyewitness Janet Cross of RD 1 Sweet Valley, the blaze began around 4 a.m. Tuesday morning in the area of the window curtains in the front of the structure. Cross' home is located directly across from the Thomas Guest Home.

"I looked out my front window

and saw what appeared to be a small fire on the drapes," Cross said. "My husband and I ran across the street to see if we could help, but when we got there (to the front porch of the Thomas Guest Home only about 40 yards away) we could not do anything. The flames were spreading too fast."

Mrs. Cross went on to say that heat from the fire inside was so hot that a "window blew out (the guest home) went up in flames," Cross said.

Cross' daughter, Holly, age 14, said she also saw the flames burning in the area of the front window.

"I saw flames coming from the front of the house," said Holly. "The flames were near the front door and within a very short period of time the whole house was burning."

State Police Fire Marshalls were rummaging through the debris Tuesday afternoon looking for clues as to what might have caused the blaze. At press time, no one would speculate on the cause.

According to fire officials at the site, the 14 boarders at the home were all living on the first floor of the structure. Ronald and Patricia Thomas along with their children Leslie, Lance, 15; and Ronald Jr., 7; were sleeping on the second floor.

Police officials say that Ronald Sr. sustained his second degree burns while attempting to get his family members and some of the boarders out of the building.

The Thomas' escaped the flames by leaping from the second story windows. 15-year-old Lance Thomas, who jumped off the roof attached to the rear of the building, said the structure had a new fire alarm system and that they (residents of the guest home) had regular fire drills.

"The alarm system was working and we just installed it only two to three years ago," said Lance. "The alarm is a very, very loud system and you could hear it as the fire trucks were approaching." Thomas continued by saying that his mother and father held monthly fire drills coordinated with the Sweet Valley Fire Department.

"It just a freak thing that can happen to anyone," the younger Thomas continued. He estimated the damage to "be in the tens of thousands."

Luzerne County Coroner Dr. George Hudak said Tuesday afternoon that his office will make a final determination on the causes of death for the seven victims by Wednesday morning.

Fire officials are continuing their investigation.

Gate

(Continued from page 1)

Gate of Heaven is a member of the Scranton Diocese under the direction of Bishop James C. Timlin. Timlin and other diocese officials spent the past three weeks debating about whether or not to close the doors of Bishop O'Reilly Senior High School in Kingston in June, 1986. The officials, however, announced on Monday they would keep the Kingston-based school opened indefinitely.

Morgan has been principal of Gate of Heaven, located on Machell Avenue, Dallas, for the past two years. Morgan heads a staff of 14 full-time and three part-time teachers. Gate of Heaven provides education for students from grades one through eighth.

Currently, Gate of Heaven has an enrollment figure of 280 students. Morgan said that the school is within its operating budget as long as the enrollment does not drop

below 250 students.

Gate of Heaven, which opened its doors in 1952, costs a student a total of \$950 a year for their education. The \$950 tuition fee is divided into two funding sources.

A student will pay \$400 tuition costs for a single academic year and the participating parishes of Gate of Heaven will contribute the remaining \$550. Tuition costs spanning the past three years are as follows.

For the 1985-86 school year: \$400 a year for the first child; \$400 for the second child and \$50 for each additional child of a household.

In 1984-85, a student paid \$300 for the first child and \$150 for the second. In 1983-84 tuition was \$250 for the first child and approximately \$75 for the second child.

The major participating parishes of Gate of Heaven are Saint Theresa's, Shavertown; Saint Frances Cabrini, Carverton; and Lady of

Victory Church, Harveys Lake.

Morgan said the Gate of Heaven parish currently provides over 50 percent of the funds used to make up the difference between student tuition and the overall costs of a year's education.

During the July 14 public meeting in the Bishop O'Reilly gymnasium, Father John Jordan, acting diocese superintendent and principal of Bishop Hoban, said that two of the major reasons behind the possible closing of Bishop O'Reilly were declining enrollment and lack of support from the community.

"We have a PTG (parent-teachers guild) here and it's very active," Morgan said. "Community support is one thing we have had no problem in getting."

Morgan said that approximately 80 percent of Gate of Heaven graduates continue their education at Bishop O'Reilly High School.

— JOHN F. KILDUFF

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